

CAUCASIA AND CENTRAL ASIA

amply attested in the available historical sources. Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov wrote in this connection to the Russian Minister in Teheran, in 1911: "The English, pursuing as they do, vital aims in Europe, will if necessary sacrifice certain interests in Asia in order to maintain the convention with us. These circumstances we can naturally turn to our own advantage, for instance in our Persian policy." ^{2G} In British circles, on the contrary, there was uneasiness lest this concession prove fatal to imperial interests in the East. Statesmen of the Indian school were particularly alarmed by the agreement. Lord Curzon, former Viceroy of India and later Foreign Secretary, gave vent to his anxiety when he wrote soon after the conclusion of the agreement: "The Russian Convention is in my view deplorable. It gives up all that we have been fighting for for years, and gives up with a wholesale abandon that is truly cynical in its recklessness. Ah, me, it makes one despair of public life. The efforts of a century sacrificed and nothing or next to nothing in return."

^{2T}

This pessimism is intelligible in the light of the traditional British doctrine that India constituted the heart of the Empire, which had to be protected at almost any cost. The safest way to protect India was to establish on her frontiers a chain of territories that would be either under British ascendancy or free from the influence of another Big Power. Exclusive British ascendancy in the chain of territories consisting of Iran, Afghanistan, Sin-Kiang, and Tibet was barred by Imperial Russia. Accordingly two alternatives remained: (a) a shared ascendancy through agreement on Russian and British spheres of influence or (b) a preservation of the

independence of the territories as a political no man's land between Russian and British imperial organisms. Of the two alternatives, the British preferred the latter. This preference was based on two facts: first, any division of territory would serve as a precedent to sanction further Russian penetration toward India or the Persian Gulf; hence any British gain would be offset by an increased Russian military threat to India; secondly, the pacification of the occupied and naturally discontented

20 Quoted in "Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Persia," by Mary M. McCarthy, *University of Buffalo Studies*, vol. VI (1935)* no. 2, p. 61.

27 Quoted in *The Life of Lord Curzon* by the Earl of Ronaldshay (London, 1928), III, 38.